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A Qualitative Study Of Heterosexual Ally Development Among The Traditional Student Population At A Mid-Sized Midwestern University

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A Qualitative Study of Hetersexual Ally Development among the Traditional Student Population at a Mid-Sized Midwestern University

(TITLE)

BY

Miranda Therese Ambuske

THESIS

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A Qualitative Study of Heterosexual Ally Development among the Traditional Student Population at a Mid-Sized Midwestern University

By

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THESIS

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Charleston, IL

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Abstract

The purpose of this study conducted, at a mid-sized Midwestern university, was to examine the ally development of heterosexual college students, specifically with gay, lesbian and bisexual populations. Five participants who were current college students, who self-identified as heterosexual allies, took part in open-ended life-history interviews in which they were asked to share their perspective on what may have affected their ally development. The interviews specifically probed what, if any, institutional resources, faculty or staff members may have assisted in their development, as well as if any pre-college factors made them more susceptible to developing into an ally in college. Responses from the five participants showed their ally development to be in spite of any university involvement rather than because of it. The theory developed from this present qualitative study shows that the student's in-place value system, their interactions with homosexual and bisexual individuals and their pre-college experiences played the largest role in their ally development. Future recommendations for practitioners and researchers include conducting this study on a campus that has more administrative support to homosexual and bisexual students to see if there are any changes in the affects to ally development, as well as developing supportive and informative institutional structures for all students seeking information.

Dedication

"To all of the gay and lesbian [and transgender] kids out there tonight who have been told that they are less than by their churches or by the government or by their families… you are beautiful, wonderful creatures of value and that no matter what anyone tells you, God does love you and that very soon, I promise you, you will have equal rights, federally, across this great nation of ours."

-Dustin Lance Black, 2009 Screenwriting Oscar winner for *Milk*-

Thank you for saying it better than I could, I will continue with this promise.

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Most importantly, thank you to my family, my siblings, and above all my parents. You have given me hope, love and support my whole life. Your struggles have been monumental and unimaginable, and my road has been easier because of them. All that I accomplish is to honor you, and make you proud. I love you always.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Supporting the needs of all students is a major priority for most college faculty members and administrators. Even if an institution's student body is predominantly homogenous with a very apparent dominant culture, there will still be those who fall into the minority – thereby creating that which is 'dominant'. As research on student development theory has progressed from its inception in the 1970s (Miller & Prince, 1976) focusing primarily on white males to the present, theoretical perspectives have grown to include developmental treatises dealing with different races, cultures, religions, different standards of morality, sexuality, and gender. Research can be found on methods to create supportive inclusive environments for students, no matter what their identifying characteristics may be (Broido, 2000a). Other research has addressed the ways in which minority students, whether their minority status is race, gender, religion or sexuality, may perceive the college experience (Kezar & Moriarty, 2000), and even their perceptions of the faculty and staff members who work with them. More recent research can be found about social justice, creating supportive groups and how to help minority students achieve to the best of their abilities. Where interested faculty, staff and administrators will find research lacking is in the area of the dominant social groups, for example, men, whites and heterosexuals (Broido, 2000a). While writings about the privileged status of these groups versus identified minority groups can be found, the theories and processes of getting dominant group members to become involved with, and an ally to minority groups among them is very limited, specifically in the case of, Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) communities on college campuses (Evans & Wall, 1991).

The importance of majority group allies to minority groups has been apparent for many years. Allies can add legitimacy and strength to an issue, showing that a particular fight is not solely being fought by those demanding some redress for grievances. It can be more difficult for majority group members to discount minority voices demanding change if other majority group members are among that group, with their voices also raised. Broido specified the three ways that allies can help to create and maintain a better campus climate for LGB persons, "personal support, education of others and institutional advocacy" (Broido, 2000a, p.3). Each of these avenues toward minority support can manifest themselves in several ways. Support can be as simple as adapting a vocabulary of LGB friendly terminology, such as the usage of 'partner' instead of girlfriend or boyfriend. Allies also "take responsibility for educating others in a more formal manner" (p. 51) through many different forums such as lectures, poster campaigns or question/answer panels (Washington and Evans, 1991). Institutional advocacy is when straight allies ensure that the current system at their institution is fair and unbiased to LGB individuals.

These reasons and many more delineate the importance of having heterosexual allies working toward full inclusion of LGB persons on the contemporary college campus. In this type of environment that inherently invites growth and development, studying how heterosexuals become allies to LGB persons and groups is a critical issue that will affect the acceptance and inclusion of the minority group. As traditional students struggle to find their place in the world of majors, extracurricular activities and residence hall communities they are also redefining themselves. This introduction to individuals who come from different places and backgrounds is critical, "contact with

LBG people who are out, especially sustained or significant contact is associated with more positive attitudes toward lesbians, bisexual people and gay men" (Bowen and Bourgeois, 2001; Haddock, Zanna and Esses, 1993; Herek and Capitanio, 1996; in Evans and Broido, 2005 p. 48). What is called the contact hypothesis is used in many theories for developing social justice allies (Bowen and Bourgeois, 2001). One way to raise awareness and promote understanding is to have heterosexuals and LGB students interact with one another. Proximity with interaction reduces both fear of the other and the perception of difference. While the contact hypothesis and the roles straight allies can play are both understood for their importance and are not disputed, there are still many untapped areas of research.

The present qualitative study is intended to examine the ways in which heterosexual students develop into allies for LGB students during their time in college. This study took place at a midsized predominantly white, rural, comprehensive Midwestern campus. The study was designed to discover what factors influenced these allies in their development as LGB social justice advocates, and what can be done to replicate LGB supportive environments within university settings. The following questions guided the present research.

1) When and in what ways have self-identified straight allies become conscious of their own identity as heterosexual?
2) Did any faculty or staff members have an influence on the student's development into a straight ally? If so, how?
3) What, if any, resources provided by the university helped heterosexual students in their development as a straight ally?

4) What kind of pre-college factors played a part in a heterosexual student's development into a straight ally?
5) In what ways have campus lesbian, gay or bisexual community members validated straight ally support?

Summary

The present qualitative research seeks to understand the manner in which heterosexual students become allies for LGB students on the college campus. The next chapter will present a review of literature dealing with …., and the third chapter will develop the grounded theory methodology upon which the research will be carried out. The "voices" of heterosexual allies and the emerging themes surrounding those voices will be described in Chapter IV, and in Chapter V, a theory of ally development based on the present research will be proposed. Recommendations for further research, and suggested campus practices to support ally development will also be included in the final chapter.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

The literature review for the present study on the facilitation of straight ally development will address four broad areas: Preexisting Conditions, Institutional Environment and Access to Resources, Awareness of Oppression and Privilege, and Meaningful Contact and Meaning Making. (Evans and Herriott, 2004; Broido, 2000a; D'Augelli, 1994; Engelken, 1998). Preexisting Conditions will address the different environmental, psychosocial, and cognitive conditions that lead students to become more susceptible to developing into straight allies. Institutional Environment and Access to Resources looks at the environment surrounding the heterosexual college student, what effects available resources have on them, and if their collegiate environment encourages ally development. Awareness of Oppression and Privilege will look at how heterosexual students become aware of their own sexual orientation and its associated privileges, and how they become aware of how others lack equivalent privileges. Meaningful Contact and Meaning Making will examine the process of how interactions with gay and lesbian individuals as well as interactions with meaningful role models are an important factor in ally development, and how these interactions are internalized by heterosexual students and lead to the important process of meaning making. These four areas of inquiry are very broad, but are very important to fully understanding the process of the development of a heterosexual student into a straight ally; as such these areas must be carefully examined.

Preexisting conditions

The idea of preexisting conditions affecting the acceptance and tolerance of heterosexual individuals is not new. In 1988 Herek examined the attitudes of heterosexual college students towards lesbians and gay men using the Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men (ATGL) scale. He described the tool as a "20 item scale in Likert format with two 10-item sub scales: Attitudes Toward Lesbians (ATL) and Attitudes towards Gay Men (ATG)" (Herek, 1988, p. 455). The study was conducted using participants on one campus, then replicated in a second study across many campuses. The results focused mainly on gender, specifically if there were any changes in attitudes between heterosexual males vs. females towards lesbians and gay men. His research revealed "heterosexual males consistently held more negative attitudes than heterosexual females" (Herek, 1988, p. 469). These results can be partially explained by the influence of societal norms, as in traditional Western society there is an emphasis on heteronormativity, especially among male populations. Other researchers studying on campus students becoming social justice allies also identified factors that contributed to ally development. Broido stated that one of the significant factors that pointed to students becoming allies was an established egalitarian value system (2000a). In combined research with Herek (1986), Broido expanded upon this theory. Adding the value of compassion combined with an egalitarian value system was very important to developing positive attitudes towards lesbians, gay men and bisexuals (Broido 2000a, Herek 1986). Another very important factor is the awareness of the student's own heterosexual identity.

Institutional environment and access to resources

The nature of the university environment impacts the development of social justice allies. If a school's environment is very socially conservative, or has no visible lesbian, gay or bisexual population, there would be no visible need for heterosexuals to become straight allies. The sociocultural environment plays a key factor in assisting students to understand their own identity and to define their place in the world around them (D'Augelli, 1994; Fassinger 1998). Different environments will also facilitate change in different aspects of a student's personality, meaning that someone will change based upon the environment they experience. The institutional environment can fluctuate, whether it is supportive of gay men, lesbians and bisexuals, or has a very negative atmosphere; whether it supports individual thought and development, or pushes heteronormative agendas, different environmental cues and contexts will encourage different aspects of a students' identity (Evans & Levine, 1990). The interactions and impressions a student has of the environment around them will contribute to their identity development. An understanding of a need for change or stasis in personality comes out of the interactions that an individual has with the society, or institutions around them (Cass, 1979, Fowler 1981). A very important piece of the institutional environment is the people that are a part of it, specifically faculty members, administrators and support staff. The impact that these institutional employees have upon the socio-cognitive development of students is huge, as in a university setting they play a role in not only the cognitive academic development of students, but also in their personal psychosocial development. Engelken (1998) described how faculty members and administrators assisted lesbian, gay and bisexual students in developing their identity with the environment around them, and

the same can also be said for heterosexual students. Faculty members and administrators can encourage an environment of social justice and support heterosexual students in their own thoughts about homosexuality, effectively defining the institutional environment as one of support and acceptance. Heterosexual students must also be able to access information about lesbians, gay men and bisexuals, as well as find evidence of heterosexual involvement on their campus with events or activities that concern the gay, lesbian and bisexual population. The accessibility of information about social justice assists heterosexual students in their ally development (Broido, 2000a).

Awareness of oppression and privilege

In order for heterosexual students who have some of the preexisting conditions fulfilled, have the resources provided for them by their institution and are in an environment that is willing to support their cause, to stand up and become allies, they must first realize that there is a problem. In many ways this lack of problem recognition is similar to white identity development. Heterosexual students must become aware of their own privilege and the inequality inherent in the world around them, and they must go through the process of accepting and understanding their privilege. Sullivan (1998), using the research of Cass (1979) and others on the development of sexual identity in gays and lesbians and combining it with Hardiman and Jackson's (1992) Racial Identity Development Model (RIDM), found that it is possible to adapt all of this research to create a model of identity development in heterosexual, lesbian, gay and bisexual students. Her adaptation is extremely important to research in ally development on college campuses as it defines the steps involved, from naïveté, acceptance, resistance, redefinition to internalization, and even goes through certain interventions that might be

necessary to helping heterosexual students through difficult areas in their ally development.

The first stage is naïveté. In this stage Hardiman and Jackson (1992) stated that there is "little or no social awareness of race per se" (p. 24). In adapting this theory to heterosexual students, this stage could be described as a person who is ignorant that there might be sexual minorities, or those who have different sexual/affectional preferences other than heterosexuality. The amount of time spent in this naïveté stage for a heterosexual student may be much longer than for a white student developing an awareness of race, because as Sullivan stated, "sexual orientation is a difference that is not apparent" upon first encountering another person(p. 4).

In the second stage, acceptance, an understanding has been reached that there are people who have different preferences, but the "dominant ideology" of society, in this case, the concept of heterosexuality as the only correct orientation has been internalized (Hardiman & Jackson, 1992, p. 4). In this stage, heterosexuals are often more aggressive in expressing their beliefs, and in males, includes the need to demonstrate the fact that they are manly and proud of it. Many threats of harassment and violence come from heterosexuals who are in this stage. They may become frustrated or angry about those who they feel are "flaunting" their homosexuality (p. 5).

In order to make the transition from acceptance to the next stage of resistance, there generally must be some sort of conflict between the strongly held beliefs of one in the acceptance stage, and some new experience that they have – perhaps finding out a close friend is gay. This is the point where heterosexuals begin to realize the inequality inherent in the existing societal system. At the resistance stage in Hardiman and

Jackson's (1992) white identity development, some white people may feel so remorseful about their role in societal oppression that they might try to distance themselves from their own identity group and work to adopt a new identity with communities of color (Sullivan, 1998, p. 24). The same may be seen in heterosexuals at the resistance stage, where they may adapt some cultural expressions of the gay community, such as wearing supportive buttons or stickers and seeking out interactions with those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Heterosexuals in this stage are traditionally very responsive to programs that promote understanding and ally development.

The fourth stage is called redefinition, in which the dominant group begins their emergence from the resistant stage, often with negative views of their own group. They have seen how they, as the privileged group, have perpetuated a society of inequality. In the redefinition stage, new definitions of what it means to be a member of the dominant group are sought (Hardiman & Jackson, 1992). It is important that these dominant group members, whether white or heterosexual, develop positive self definitions that are independent of oppression –racism or heterosexism. For heterosexuals this means they may need opportunities to have discourse with gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students so that they can continue developing towards the final stage, and begin to see themselves as something other than an oppressor.

The final stage is internalization. Hardiman and Jackson defined internalization as the integration of "newly defined value into all aspects of life" (1992, p. 33). Heterosexuals will have accepted a positive self-identity "independent of heterosexist societal definitions of heterosexuality" (Sullivan, 1998, p. 11). With this acceptance

heterosexuals will also realize that they too will benefit from abolishing heterosexism, and work towards that end.

All of these stages are important in the transition of a heterosexual person into an ally, and encouraging their awareness of oppression and privilege. With an understanding of these developmental stages, it is possible for student affairs practitioners to design programming to encourage students who are at varying awareness levels to confront what their biases are and create opportunities for students to become even more aware.

Meaningful contact and meaning making

All experiences that a person has shape their perceptions of the world around them. The bombardment of the media and available information sources, along with interactions that are had in everyday life affect how people think about everything. Engelken (1998), using Cass's (1979) model for homosexual identity formation and Fowler's (1981) stages of faith defined the three tools that are prominent in the construction of meaning from experiences, resources, interpersonal opportunities, and role models. According to Engelken (1998), "the basis for both change and stability in individual behavior and understanding is found in interactions between self and society." (pp. 23-24). While Engelken's meaning making theory was specifically geared toward gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students making meaning of their place in a college environment, it is very adaptable to the heterosexual experience in the context of ally development.

The first tool, resources, consists of what services are available on a campus that would answer questions, or even provide a specific place to direct inquiries and interest regarding LGB students. It ties in directly with the previous area of focus, Institutional

Environment and Resources. It is important that LGB students see that they have a place on campus, and are reflected in every area, such as "library acquisitions, class texts, magazines on sale in the bookstore, and professionals' offices" (Engelken, 1998, p. 24). In the same respect, this inclusion is just as important for heterosexuals who are in various stages of their ally development. In order for them to recognize that there is another orientation other than heterosexual, they must see evidence of homosexuality or bisexuality. Affirming resources need to be available where heterosexuals can get questions answered, whether at a library or the best case scenario – a LGB campus resource center. Many times institutions resist this step, pointing to their student run Pride organizations as resource enough. This, according to D'Augelli, puts the "burden of solving the problems of their own victimization" directly onto the students (Fassinger, 1998, pp. 25-26). The job that trained higher education professionals should carry out to support a positive environment for all students is thus abdicated to the students so marginalized. Many institutions may look to their budgets, or offer the excuse that they do not provide any funding to their student groups, but support to Pride groups could mean so many more things than just financial support. Appropriate resources must be provided by the institution in the form of advisor training, inclusion in campus-wide events and a voice in campus decisions. Provision of such resources will tell the LGB community and all interested heterosexuals that this particular community is an integral part of the institution.

The next tool, interpersonal opportunities, refers to the responsibility the administration, faculty and staff of an institution have to encourage meaningful interactions between students. These interactions can help expose students to diversity

and allow them a chance to understand differences. Programming that intentionally welcomes LGB interactions or promotes those themes will make a statement to the university community of acceptance and inclusion. Engelken (1998) gave the example of dances with advertisements that welcome students to bring their partners, whether same or different gendered. Classroom inclusion of LGB topics also assists in facilitating conversation and discussion that is inclusive to LGB issues. This gives students a chance to voice their opinions and perhaps spark the curiosity of heterosexual students who might not have otherwise discussed this topic. Interpersonal connections may bring up sensitive topics which, according to Engelken, must be encouraged, "professionals must encourage dialogue among students of all perspectives"(27) particularly where topics of faith are discussed. Faith and religion tend to be a central part of many students lives, and as they develop through college they may realize that they have questions or confusion regarding how their present thoughts fit into their beliefs. This becomes important as heterosexual students developing into allies, like their LGB peers, "must learn a new level of spiritual maturity, basing their spiritual life on inner convictions and not on outside expectations" (McNeill, 1994, p. 317). As homosexuality, or any sexual minority, is not acceptable in many religions, interpersonal relationships and conversations on faith are important to help students develop their own standards for what is acceptable and what is not. Traversing this very large gap is a major leap for heterosexuals in their ally development.

The last tool in Engelken's (1998) meaning making theory is role models. If administrators, faculty and staff are working towards providing resources and interpersonal opportunities, then they are most likely in a position to be a positive role

model. However, there may be limitations, whether actual or perceived, that prevent university employees from stepping into an active role in LGB advocacy. D'Augelli discussed how faculty, who are interested in issues and research of LGB may refrain from that work, or even cut anything of that subject matter from their classes for fear of being themselves labeled, or from repercussions from administration (1989, p. 129). This fear of repercussions underscores the need for administrators to stand up against discrimination of all kinds. Without the assurance that there will be no consequences for discussions or content related to LGB, students looking for strong role models would be hard pressed to find them. D'Emilio emphasized that a statement of non-discrimination must "explicitly acknowledge" who it protects and can not be a vague statement of fairness by administrators (Academe, 1990, p.18). Sexual orientation and even gender orientation must be included in nondiscrimination policies so that faculty feel safe about their status at the university, and are comfortable discussing such topics with students. With this security, the last tool in Engelken's process of meaning making falls into place – students can find role models with whom they can discuss their changing ideas and inner conflict, ultimately moving toward ally development.

Summary

The literature reviewed in Chapter II encompassed the different areas of research that surround student development and what factors contributed to the specific development of a straight ally. A theory of ally development was created using the four broad concepts of preexisting conditions, institutional environment and access to resources, awareness of oppression and privilege, meaningful contact and meaning making. In Chapter III the methodology for the present study will be presented, while

Chapter IV examines the voices from the participants with emerging themes that are associated with the research questions about their ally identity development. Chapter V presents conclusions that integrate the themes that emerged from the participant interviews with the research available and presented in Chapter II. Chapter V also presents a theory developed from the themes discovered in the participant responses about ally identity development, as well as future implications on heterosexual identity development on the college campus and recommendations for practitioners and researchers.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Purpose

The purpose of the present study was to understand the progression of how heterosexual college students at a traditional four year Midwest comprehensive university develop into self-described allies for gay, lesbian and bisexual students. The study sought to understand the role that the university might play in the development of heterosexual allies for LGB students, as well as to examine if the university was lacking in any services that may assist in the formation of ally development.

Methods

This study was conducted on-site at a mid-sized Midwestern university using qualitative research methods (Bogdan & Bicklan, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and constant comparative analysis.

Participants for the present qualitative study were traditional four-year undergraduate college students who self identified as heterosexual and as straight allies. There were no restrictions based on gender, year in school or age, but one criterion that determined inclusion was that the participant needed to have come to their self-identity of a straight ally during their four years in college.

The recruitment of participants for this study was done by connecting with the university's student-run Pride organization. Volunteers were enlisted by explaining to the group the purpose of the study and the required qualifications of participants. Additional participants were enlisted using the "snowball technique" (McMillan & Schumacher,

2006), in which current participants were allowed to refer other participants to the primary investigator (PI) that they knew to fit the necessary criteria for inclusion.

List of Participants

Drake, 22 year old male, upper-class student who works as a resident assistant on campus and comes from a suburban town of a large city about three hours from the university.

Amy, 21 year old female, upper-class student is a student athlete and is also from a suburb of a large city.

Riley, 19 year old, female, underclass student is also a student athlete and is from a suburban town as well.

Colleen, 20 year old, female, underclass student is the third student athlete in the study and she is from a small town at the southern end of the state.

Sam, 19 year old, male, underclass student who is involved in the student-run Pride organization on campus and is from a small town in the vicinity of another large city in the state.

Data Collection

Data for the purposes of the present study were collected through open-ended life-history qualitative interviews with volunteer participants (Appendix A). Prior to the interview, each participant was asked to complete an informed consent form (Appendix B) and was reminded that their participation was strictly voluntary and confidential, and that they could choose at anytime to remove themselves from the study. The interview was audio recorded for later transcription. Participants were assigned aliases and these pseudonyms were used in lieu of real names throughout this study.

Data Analysis

Data were collected for the present qualitative study through interviews with five participants that met the qualification involved with being a traditional college student and self identified heterosexual ally – and had arrived at that identity after beginning their collegiate career. Before the data were analyzed, participants were provided with the transcriptions of their interview for member checking and offered the opportunity to make any alterations. Once these transcriptions were signed and returned to the researcher, data analysis began.

Each of the transcribed interviews was examined for common themes regarding the development of the participant's identity as a straight ally using the method of constant comparison and color coded to the research questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin. 1990). The constant comparative analysis technique uses "induction, deduction and verification to develop theory" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 110). The color coding allowed for the researcher to see emerging themes in the data. As soon as the interviews were coded through a first time, the researcher then compared the answers to the research questions and to each other, looking for similarities and dissenting voices. The data were coded through once again to compare and contrast the coded responses. This coded data was then examined a final time to ensure data saturation, and the resulting themes were used for interpretation and grounded theory development.

Implications

This study has the potential to have a strong impact on the field of student affairs. As more gay, lesbian and bisexual students enter college already out of the closet or even soon to emerge, their public openness will affect the experiences of heterosexual

students. Student affairs professionals and college administrators need to understand what resources need to be made available, and what steps the university can take to make sure it is meeting the needs of all students and encouraging an atmosphere of acceptance and inclusion.

Limitations

The present study has several limitations. The first of which is that it was only conducted on one university campus, so it is impossible to say if data from a similar study conducted at another institution would yield similar results. A second limitation is that the study focused on understanding ally development among five participants, three of which were on the same sports team. While the participants varied in age, year in school and represented both socially defined genders, conclusions drawn from the study cannot be inferred to represent ally development in general.

Summary

Chapter III has described the methodology for the present study guided by Bogdan & Bicklan (1982) and Lincoln & Guba (1985). The method of data analysis was constant comparison guided by Schwandt (2001), Lincoln & Guba (1985) and Strauss & Corbin (1990). Chapter IV examines the voices from the volunteer participants with emerging themes that are associated with the research questions about their ally identity development. Chapter V presents conclusions, a theory developed from the themes discovered in the participant responses about ally identity development, as well as future implications on heterosexual identity development on the college campus, and recommendations for practitioners and researchers.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The present study addressed the development of heterosexual allies on college campuses. The purpose of this study was to reach a better understanding of how heterosexual college students become self-identified allies to gay, lesbian and bisexual students during their traditional college years. The study was conducted on a mid-sized comprehensive Midwestern university campus and participants were enlisted through a connection with the student–run Pride organization, using flyers on campus as well as utilizing the "snowball technique" (McMillan & Schumacher) in which current participants were allowed to refer other participants for inclusion. The criterion for participation was that they had to be a traditional college student still in college, and had to self-identify as a straight ally. Participants took part in an hour-long open-ended life history interview and each interview was then transcribed and examined using the techniques of grounded theory to arrive at specific resulting themes. Each of questions that guided the research are addressed individually below so that themes that emerged from the interviews conducted can be highlighted.

Research Question #1: When and in what ways have self identified straight allies become conscious of their own identity as heterosexual?

The first research question probed what understanding each participant had of their own sexuality. Specifically, when did they become aware of their heterosexual identity, as well as when in their life experience did they become aware of other sexual orientations. All participants had self-identified as heterosexual before being

interviewed, but this question was intended to prompt their reflection in depth about when they actually became conscious of their sexuality. Sexual orientation is not an easily distinguishable difference in public settings compared to race, and those individuals who are a part of the dominant heterosexual majority may not realize that other people might have different sexual/affectional orientations other than opposite gender attraction (Sullivan, 1998). All of the participants in the study answered this question in a similar way, some stating that they never thought about it, and had not considered their sexuality until they realized there were those who might not be attracted to the opposite gender. One of the participants, Colleen (pseudonym), a 20 year old underclass student, stated, "…I never really questioned it, I've always been very attracted to the opposite sex…. It was in high school when I first, like, started to realize that other people might go another way." Drake, a 21 year old upper-class student, identified the time when he first noticed himself experiencing an attraction to another person, saying, "it started early on. Same age as most boys probably – 5th grade or so."

Amy, a 21 year old upper-class student, shared a different story. She strongly identified as heterosexual, but through the course of the interview revealed that she dated a female college teammate for a year. "I think I just fell in love with my best friend… I'm really not attracted to girls." Prompted to elaborate more about whether she still considered herself heterosexual while she was in that relationship, Amy replied, "[I was] confused." Then she stated that she could never see herself ever dating another girl again, and considered herself heterosexual. Amy was a member of an athletic team that had a large number of lesbians on it, and she revealed that was her first conscious encounter

with homosexuality. When asked if her surroundings contributed to her relationship with another girl, Amy replied,

> "It was definitely the surroundings, like, it would have never crossed my mind, but, being around it so much and I mean, every day, like every single day I was around, like, my friends and my roommates that dress like boys, and so like, I guess over time I just like…you know, became more… maybe like curious is a good word for it."

When describing when they became aware of their own heterosexuality, many of the participants described when they first became aware of other sexual orientations. Sam, a 19 year old male underclassman, described that he had been unaware up until he was in high school, and then realized that homosexuality existed through, "TV shows, movies". Riley, a 19 year old female underclassman, talked about how oblivious she had been through most of her high school years, and had slowly become aware of homosexuality, but was not really cognizant of it until she had an uncomfortable interaction with a female teammate who Riley perceived to be flirting with her, "...that really freaked me out…she was the first person I dealt with and she was very, very scary."

Research Question #2: Did any faculty or staff members have an influence on the student's development into a straight ally? If so, how?

Participants revealed that their interactions with faculty and staff had been either nonexistent or negative when it concerned any issues dealing with gay, lesbian, bisexual or allied themes. Only one participant, Drake, discussed any focused conversations about equality. He highlighted his job as a Resident Assistant and the diversity training that he had received from residence life professional staff, saying, "They basically enforce that everybody is equal, and you treat them as they are equal". Drake was asked to elaborate

on his support network for his Resident Assistant position, as he had brought up challenges he had in the past with a homosexual resident in his community. When asked to describe who he went to for support and guidance he replied that he would talk with his supervisors, but described how these conversations made him a little uncomfortable because of his lack of understanding about their views on homosexuality, "I'm not sure of their views exactly," he stated, "I know that their job tells them say the obvious.... I can't tell if they're worried about the actual individual or getting in trouble with higher ups." Drake reflected that dealing with complicated situations in his job involving homosexuality would have been a lot easier had he known more about how his supervisors personally felt, or if he personally witnessed them conducting themselves as a supportive ally. When asked if he had any interactions with staff during training that made him feel more comfortable about their vales he replied, "I don't really think that I gained much from the training besides, you know, [everyone is] equal."

Amy, Colleen and Riley all mentioned negative interactions with academic faculty members, specifically in response to the athletic team on which all three were members. Colleen stated that one of her teammates had a professor say "Oh, you're on such and such team? Oh, so that's why you dress like a boy." Colleen then described the pressures she felt to dress as feminine as possible because her professors, as she described their behavior, implied that, "they'll kind of give me a look and they will kind of ask the question, and I'm just kind of like, 'okay, alright, I'll come in pink next time, thank you.'" Amy revealed that she had been in classes where professors had used pejorative terms for sexual orientation, and that she felt that she was finally getting to the point in her development where "I feel like I can stand up to a professor and be like, you

know, you really shouldn't say 'fag'." Riley angrily described an interaction with a professor where the instructor had crossed a line, and said in a friendly manner to her, "Oh, I just love it how you look so butch!" Riley's reaction was one of shock and frustration that a faculty member had said that, and made Riley feel as though she was forced to assert her heterosexuality. In her own words she explained, "Sometimes I feel like I have to defend myself, which I don't want to say like I feel like I'm defending myself." Riley's explanation of that statement revealed that she felt badly about being pressured to state that she was heterosexual, because she didn't want her friends to perceive that she thought that being a lesbian was a bad thing.

All three ladies mentioned that the one faculty member that might have had the most impact on them – their coach – appeared completely oblivious to the fact that some team members were not heterosexual. Riley said, "I'm pretty sure coach is still convinced that there are no lesbians on our team, because he specifically said it one day." Amy mentioned her coach following up on a large fight that Amy had had with a friend on the team who was a Lesbian and her coach's response was, "Did you all steal each other's boyfriends?" Amy reported that she had no idea how to reply to that statement, as her friend was a very out and proud lesbian. Colleen had a slightly different take on their coach's apparent lack of knowledge, saying,

> "I feel as though if he were to admit that he knew, I feel as though some parents and maybe even some possible recruits may ask him that, and if he were to be like, yes or no, we may lose [that recruit]."

Research Question #3: What, if any, resources provided by the University helped heterosexual students in their development as a straight ally?

Two themes emerged from participant responses about University resources available to support their development as an ally. Some, like Riley, Amy and Sam named the student-run Pride organization on campus as a possible resource, though only Sam had actually attended any of the events or meetings associated with that group. The other theme centered on peer interaction. Drake and Colleen did not mention the group at all and solely mentioned the students around them who had affected their development. Drake said, "I would just have to say that my experience, like with [name of gay student] and there were a few other's on my floor last year, that helped, like just the interaction helped more than anything else." These same sentiments were echoed when Colleen said, "I can't really say that any faculty has really opened anything for me, um, I'd have to say it's been mostly the students and my teammates." Colleen also mentioned that some of her teammates had taken her to see speakers on campus, but claimed that this exposure still had not had much of a conscious effect on her.

While the only example that Amy could give was the student-run Pride organization, she shared ideas that she had about what resources the university could offer to its athletes:

> "They make us go to these presentations like about life skills…and I think it'd be cool if they had like an athlete come…that was like, successful college maybe professional, whatever, and then like he did this whole spiel about how successful he was and how he worked hard and then like, at the end he was like "yeah, and now, you know, I live with my boyfriend" you know. And kind of like drop a bomb and made everyone think like "whoa, this guy's totally one of us, like he's an athlete and… you know he's gay…"

Sam was the major exception in that he had not only attended the student-run Pride organization, but he was an active member. When asked how he got involved with the Pride group he spoke of his interactions with a friend who he had learned was gay and laughingly said, "He forced me." Sam gave an indication that he had been hesitant to attend at first, but grew to thoroughly enjoy the meetings, and to attend on his own. Sam also had knowledge of one university resource available to him, saying "I haven't read anything personally, but I know the library is, has sections of [resources on homosexuality]."

Research Question #4: What kind of pre-college factors played a part in a heterosexual student's development into a straight ally?

Pre-college influences that influenced heterosexual ally development as voiced by participants centered on previous values, family, religion and interactions with homosexuals or bisexuals before college. Many of the participants had a lot to say about their families and where they were from, and how their high school or pre-college experiences had affected their development as an ally. Positive parental guidance and support was explicitly mentioned by all of the participants except Amy and Sam, though even the two of them characterized their relationships with their parents as good. When talking about these positive influences Colleen reflected on messages that she had received from her parents at an early age as the starting point of her ally development, even though she didn't know that at the time. She said, "my parents have always brought me up as you can't help who you love, color or whatever." Drake stated something similar, remarking that, "[my parents] did kinda say, basically accept people who they are." He also expressed his gratitude to them for that message, reflecting on how he had

seen others who did not receive that message of acceptance when they were young, "I see how many people have such a problem with people that are different than them, and it can become a serious issue…I guess I do have them to thank for that thought." Riley also mentioned the support she received saying that, "Ever since I was a little girl, they've always supported me for, you know, everything… they've always been there to help me." Along a similar line of thought, Colleen said, "I always knew that I would have my family support no matter what… I'll always have my family, friends can come and go, but my family will always be there."

Some of the participants also described their values, and what sort of thoughts they had about equality before coming to college. "I kind of have the personality that I'm just like, I don't care what you say and I don't care what you do." Colleen said, describing how she reconciled the differing atmospheres of her open-minded family home, and her prejudiced high school. Drake also had issues with his peers in high school, and described during the interview how he doesn't keep in touch with students who went to his high school because they didn't have the same value structure that he did,

> "They were all drinking in high school and partying and stuff, and I just had no desire to do that… I never really had a problem with being that loner type…I guess it's just maybe my personality, like I don't care what people think of me."

When questioned about where her open-mindedness had developed from, Amy described her pre-college experience of working with special-needs individuals, "I love the kids that I work with, so maybe that carried over to the fact that I don't think people should be labeled," Amy said, "I don't think people should be like, looked down upon because of who they are." Sam recounted a very similar pre-college experience as his

mother worked extensively with special needs students, and Sam had an uncle who had Downs Syndrome.

Another strong theme that developed from all of the interviews was the influence of religion, which all of the participants mentioned specifically. Three of them, Drake, Amy and Colleen, identified as Catholic, Sam identified as United Methodist and Riley identified as the "religious person in her family" because she still went to church while others in her family had stopped doing so in recent years, but she did not characterize the denomination of Christianity to which she belonged. Two of the three Catholic participants, Drake and Colleen, discussed how their religious beliefs fit coherently with their ally identity. Drake stated that his parent's influence shaped how he understood his religion,

> "the odd thing is that we're Catholic, which I know that they look at stuff like that and they're like 'Oh no, the bible says no!' but…we were basically just told, treat everyone else as you would like to be treated…it was the biggest factor in my acceptance towards [homosexuality]."

Colleen explained during her interview that she had struggled at times with her faith and her beliefs towards homosexuality,

> "I feel like…no church and no state, no one can tell you what's right or wrong, it's your own belief and you have the right to that…I've wondered myself, like, is that being a true Christian Catholic, having that belief, in the same time you're also told not to judge others, so that's kind of how I define it."

By holding to another tenant of her faith, not judging others, she was able to overcome her concerns about homosexuality. The third Catholic, Amy, stated only that the conflict between being an ally and being Catholic, "doesn't really bother me that much." She talked briefly about her church in her hometown, saying that no one knew about her

experimentation in college, so she didn't see any problems with her faith and her ally identity, stating, "I just feel fine about it."

Riley stated that her parents influenced her more than the direction of the Bible that they read. She explained that they did not relate back to the Bible to tell her what was right or wrong, but instead, "They want me to like, learn for myself…they let me make my own decisions." She related that this independence helped her form her own opinions and beliefs, independent of her religion's stated philosophy.

Sam voiced that his Methodism was very important in his life, and he also attributed his religious beliefs to his open-mindedness, "The way I feel about it is that God loves everybody, and that's what I've always believed… I feel like God's going to accept them for who they are, and if you accept Jesus then you're going to Heaven."

Two participants, Amy and Sam, described working with mentally or physically disabled individuals, and related those experiences to how they established their equality driven values system, which in turn influenced their development as an ally. Amy related her open-mindedness directly to her work before college. "I worked extensively, very, very closely and extensively with children and adults with special needs so I feel just generally that people shouldn't be discriminated against at all." Sam, for his part, was majoring in Special Education and mentioned that his mother taught special education and now runs a Christian Program that focused on it. Furthermore, he had an uncle with Downs Syndrome who shaped his view of how other people should be treated and that you should get to know them. "I could see people looking at him like we can't do certain things, but then it's like, hey, give him a chance, because he'll, they'll surprise you. That's how I've been taught, really."

Out of all the participants only two reflected upon negative pre-college factors that hindered their development. Amy remembered her father commonly using derogatory terms towards homosexuals while she was growing up. However, because "they were my teammates and they were my friends" she was able to overcome that influence when she entered college and met her first homosexual student.

Riley on the other hand, reflected upon her first encounter with someone she knew to be a sexual minority. She described an interaction with a bisexual teammate on her swim team who made her feel very uncomfortable in the locker room. "That [perception of flirtation] was very, very detrimental to me at the time" she stated, "I really think if I didn't have that moment in my life that it wouldn't be, I wouldn't be as…set back, that's the word, as I am now." Riley went on to explain that while she was still an ally, she continued to feel uncomfortable around lesbians that she didn't know, and attributed it back to her high school interaction with her teammate.

Research Question #5: In what ways have campus gay lesbian and/or bisexual community members validated straight ally support?

Four of the five participants mentioned social situations that validated their straight ally support. They described the time they spent and the connections they formed with their friends and peers who were homosexual and how they felt those interactions supported them. Colleen specifically stated she felt her lesbian teammates had demonstrated support by respecting the fact that she was heterosexual, and still maintained a friendship with her anyways. Drake brought up the conversations he and his male friends, including a gay friend, had over all different types of issues, "I think having that connection just really, really helped because…we could talk [about] anything that

was going on, and it was like, no different." He mentioned appreciating these conversations and perceiving them as supportive because of other negative interactions he had had with another homosexual student. He recounted his encounters with a gay male resident in his community that went out of his way to try to make other students and staff members feel uncomfortable. Since Drake's friend did not attempt to make him uncomfortable, he felt supported. Amy reflected on the support she had felt from her lesbian teammates, but revealed that they had offered support when she was curious and experimenting, "if you're dating someone or if you're like, you know, kinda questioning your sexuality…once people had heard about [girl's name] and I… I was overwhelmed by the welcoming that I received from the gay community."

The only participant that mentioned any tangible recognition for his ally identity was Sam. He described how the student-run Pride organization had created shirts for its members with different identity labels on it, "so I have an 'ally' shirt," he said. He also described changes in the Pride organization's student leadership, and how with new executive board members, the officers had begun to mention not only sexual and gender minority labels, but to be intentionally inclusive toward allies as well.

Despite this lack of support, two of the participants mentioned how glad they were to have developed into an ally, and how they could see it benefiting them in the future. Riley stated,

> "I still feel like I have a lot of growing to do…[but] I'm very happy that I've experience it and became an ally, I'm very happy with it because it's obviously helped me develop as a person."

Colleen considered the future when reflecting on her identity as an ally, saying "I feel that I'll be a better educator, because of my open-mindedness, and not being judgmental from the beginning."

Summary

This chapter has presented the voices of the five participants of the present study. Each interview was reviewed using grounded theory, which uses the techniques of, "induction, deduction and verification to develop theory" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 110). Using the method of constant-comparison, the data obtained was analyzed and several themes resulted from this. One theme was the importance each of the participants' voices about the importance of their pre-college experiences. Each participant described one or more impacting experiences before they arrived at their university that they identified as affecting their development. The second theme that emerged from the interviews was the importance that each of the participants gave to their interactions with peers that were gay, lesbian or bisexual. The third theme that emerged came from each of the participants' descriptions of themselves. All of them used similar descriptions for their personalities and for what they valued, displaying strong personalities and very equal-minded value systems. These themes will be used in the following chapter to develop a new theory of heterosexual ally development in college students.

In this chapter the participants have given voice to their experiences of ally development. The next chapter will expand upon these experiences through a comparison to the review of literature and develop a grounded theory.

CHAPTER V

Conclusions

The research conducted with the present study endeavored to achieve a better understanding of heterosexual ally identity development in a four year college setting. Five self-identified heterosexual allies were interviewed after they volunteered themselves to take part in the study. They described their experiences and how they had come to the identity of 'ally'. The purpose of this study was to discover how these participants developed their ally identity during their time at college. The five participants' open-ended life history interviews were examined using constant comparison for similar themes. Once preliminary themes were identified, the interviews were coded and examined again to ensure data saturation. Once data saturation was reached, the resulting themes led to the creation of a new theory of heterosexual ally development to be presented below.

Research towards heterosexual ally development has focused on four broad areas: Preexisting Conditions, Institutional Environment and Access to Resources, Awareness of Oppression and Privilege, and Meaningful Contact and Meaning Making. (Evans and Herriott, 2004; Broido, 2000a; D'Augelli, 1994; Engelken, 1998).

The 'voices' of the participants interviewed for the purposes of the present study suggested that some of these areas had more of an influence upon their ally development than others. The first, Preexisting conditions, was one that seemed to have the biggest impact, as many of the participants described their lives before college as major contributing factors to their ally development. The common themes displayed were a pre-existing open-mindedness, family support and religion. Broido's (2001a) assertion of the

need for an "egalitarian value system" (p. 7) as a critical factor in the development of social justice allies proved very accurate based upon the present responses (2000a). Many of them described themselves as open-minded or having beliefs about equality before they entered college. "I kind of have the personality that I'm just like, I don't care what you say and I don't care what you do." Colleen stated. Drake discussed how he doesn't keep in touch with people from high school, because they never had the same value structure that he did,

> "They were all drinking in high school and partying and stuff, and I just had no desire to do that…I never really had a problem with being that loner type…I guess it's just maybe my personality, like I don't care what people think of me."

Sam and Amy's value structures were influenced by their involvement with individuals with special needs, and seeing how they were treated by society. "I love the kids that I work with," Amy said, "so that maybe carried over to the fact that I don't think people should be labeled, and I don't think people should be like, looked down upon because of who they are." Amy's established values system, being "open minded" as she put it, along with her feelings for those with special needs fits in exactly with Broido's (2000a) expansion on the original theory of having an egalitarian value system, by combining with Herek (1986) and adding compassion in as a factor of ally development. Amy clearly demonstrated a strong value system pre-college and compassion through her descriptions of her work with those with special needs.

While many of the responses from the participants upheld the research found on preexisting conditions, there was one area that four out of the five of the participants in this present study described as important to their pre-college development that was only briefly touched upon in the research. All of the participants mentioned their religion and

the effect their belief structure had upon their development as an ally. Some, like Colleen mentioned how she had some difficulties reconciling the two at times, saying that she wondered, "is that being a true Christian Catholic, like having that belief" while Sam stated that his beliefs and his development as an ally went hand in hand because, "God loves everybody".

The next area, Institutional Environment and Access to Resources, elicited many interesting responses from residents that displayed the lack of institutional support that they perceived themselves to receive. Only one participant, Drake, had received any formal institutional support on the topic of equality or social justice, and that came during his job training as a Resident Assistant (RA). His description of the effect that training had upon him, however, was not very positive, "I don't really think that I gained much from the training besides, you know, [everyone is] equal." Three of the participants brought up their awareness of the student-run Pride organization on campus, while one other mentioned Pride "things" that she had attended on campus, meaning events. Only one, Sam, had attended any of the student-run Pride organization meetings. Many institutions fall back upon their student-run groups as a way to display their commitment to diversity, but D'Augelli described that tactic as putting the "burden of solving the problems of their own victimization" directly onto the heads of the victims themselves, the students (Fassinger, 1998, pp. 25-26). The student-run Pride group was the only supportive resource, besides Drake's RA training, that the students could highlight as available on their campus.

The third area, Awareness of Oppression and Privilege, was one that focused on Sullivan's (1998) model of heterosexual identity development that joined and adapted the

research of both Cass (1979) and Hardiman and Jackson (1992). It is in this section that Sullivan developed a theory that would cater to both gay, lesbian, bisexual development as well as to heterosexual ally development with the stages of Naïveté, Acceptance, Resistance, Redefinition and Internalization, which are described in detail in this study's review of literature. Each of the participants gave voice to different parts of their lives that fell into different states of this theory. All five participants could remember a time when they didn't realize they had "little, if any, social awareness of sexual orientation" (Sullivan, 1998, p. 4). Amy reflected on her own heterosexuality by speaking about when she was young saying, "it seemed normal, natural that I would date boys… I never even thought about, questioned it." Sam stated that he developed out of the Naïveté stage through the media, mentioning "TV shows, movies" as his first introduction to the concept of homosexuality during his high school years.

One of the interesting things uncovered in the interviews was that only Riley described any life experiences or opinions that were similar to a person in the Acceptance stage. When she talked about her first interaction with someone who was gay, it was a very negative one and she mentioned, "that really freaked me out…which is why I have the visual image in my brain that I do, because she was the first person I dealt with and she was very, very scary." Riley described the image in her brain of the perception that all lesbians are going to try and touch her, whether she is okay with it or not. Riley also mentioned feeling like she needed to declare herself as heterosexual when people found out what sports team she played on, "I mean I don't like saying that," she said, "because it's kind of hurting them, that I don't want to be classified as a lesbian." Riley was very

honest about still working through her comfortableness with being around lesbians that she didn't know, but was still very conscious of her identity as an ally.

The transition between acceptance and resistance is an important one, as it requires some moment of cognitive dissonance. This transition is instigated by a life experience that a person has that does not fit in coherently with their existing belief structure (Hardiman and Jackson, 1992). Sullivan provided examples of this, saying individuals in the acceptance stage may encounter, "LGBT persons who do not fit the negative stereotypes previously held, or who are in loving gay relationships…class discussions; or on campus through a strong administrative response to a gay bashing incident on campus" (Sullivan, 1998, p.7). These encounters would bring questions to the mind of homophobic or uninformed individuals. Amy, who had grown up hearing derogatory terms for homosexuals from her father described how she was able to overcome that influence when she joined her sports team, "They were my teammates and they were my friends" she said. For her, meeting homosexuals that she could be friends with helped to overcome that negative perspective she had heard from her father. Amy also shared her ideas about how she felt that university could further support other athletes who might have a negative view of homosexuality:

> "They make us go to these presentations like about life skills…and I think it'd be cool if they had like an athlete come…that was like, successful college maybe professional, whatever, and then like he did this whole spiel about how successful he was and how he worked hard and then like, at the end he was like "yeah, and now, you know, I live with my boyfriend" you know. And kind of like drop a bomb and made everyone think like "whoa, this guy's totally one of us, like he's an athlete and… you know he's gay…"

Though she did not put it into theoretical terms, Amy was describing a structured experience that would provide cognitive dissonance to the student athletes at the

presentation. The audience members would be forced to fit their perceptions of this speaker, one of a strong, successful athlete, and work it into the reality that he was homosexual. The two options they would have would to be alter their perceptions of the athlete, or alter their perceptions of homosexuality.

Resistance is the next stage in Sullivan's adapted theory, and the clearest example to resistance can be found from Amy, who experimented with dating a girl during college, but identified as heterosexual. This is a clear representation of one of the extremes of the resistance stage in Hardiman & Jackson's (1992) Racial Identity Development Model, as has been adapted by Sullivan (1998) and also in this research. In the resistance stage, members of the majority group begin to identify with the minority group after realizing the injustices inherent in the existing social system. Hardiman & Jackson described this stage as one where "[S]ome whites in active resistance become so distressed at being part of an oppressive dominant group that they distance themselves from other Whites and White culture by gravitating to communities of color and trying to adopt a new identity" (p. 28). Amy talked about how she received a huge welcoming from her lesbian teammates when she began experimenting, "if you're dating someone or if you're like, you know, kinda questioning your sexuality…once people had heard about [girl's name] and I…I was overwhelmed by the welcoming that I received from the gay community." The welcoming that Amy received helped her to settle into the resistance stage, and stay there for a full year.

Sam also described behavior that would fit in with the resistance stage. He had been strongly influenced by gay friends of his, and began to attend the student-run Pride group with them. Sullivan described heterosexual behavior in the resistance stage as,

"students in resistance may wear ally buttons and freedom rights, join political organizations advocating for gay rights, [and] increase their social interaction with LGBT students" (1998, p. 7). Sam described the t-shirt that he had received from the student-run Pride organization, "I have an 'ally' shirt" which follows along with Sullivan's description of heterosexuals in this stage proclaiming their ally identity (1998).

The redefinition stage of Sullivan's modified theory described heterosexuals who are working to combine their new beliefs with their old ones (1998). Drake and Colleen gave very good examples of the redefinition stage when they discussed their religion, and how they had been able to merge their ally identity with their Catholic faith that condemned homosexuality. "I think that faith is something that you find from within" Drake said, "it's not something that you have to be told what to believe or anything, and I feel like lightning is going to strike me, but, I think that at this point and time we're free to make our own decisions." Colleen had a similar opinion, "you're also told not to judge others" she said, explaining how she reconciled her beliefs on homosexuality with the tenants of her faith. Colleen and Drake both said that they had to search out new understandings of their faith, but felt that they were still able to be good Catholics and allies.

The final stage, internalization is one where a heterosexual has fully adapted their beliefs and ally identity into every part of their life. They have discovered "a positive identity of a heterosexual individual independent of heterosexist societal definitions of heterosexuality has been accepted" (Sullivan, 1998, p. 11). They also begin to see that they need to end inequality for the benefit of all, not just the marginalized group. The participants in this study all expressed varying levels of awareness that they still had

developing to do as an ally. Riley expressed that "I still feel like I have a lot of growing to do," but also followed it up with "I'm very happy that I've experienced it and became an ally, I'm very happy with it because it's obviously helped me develop as a person." Colleen mentioned that "I feel that I'll be a better educator, because of my open-mindedness, and not being judgmental from the beginning" which she applied to the affect that she would have on all of her students, not just those who might be sexual minorities.

The final area of study was about Meaningful Contact and Meaning Making of heterosexual allies. The participants in the study shared many of their life experiences, both past and present, and how these experiences had shaped their ally development. Engelken (1998) developed three tools from Cass's (1979) model of homosexual identity formation and Fowler's (1981) stages of faith that are prominent in constructing meaning and understanding from life experiences. The three tools are resources, interpersonal opportunities and role models, and they were originally designed for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, but are very applicable to heterosexual students.

Resources are an important part of development of heterosexual allies just as it is for gay, lesbian or bisexual students. If heterosexual students do not see alternate sexual orientations supported by resources on campus, they may struggle with developing into a supportive ally, or see no need to be an ally. Lack of visible administrative support or resources gives the message to gay, lesbian and bisexual students that "he or she is nonexistent" (Engelken, 1998, p. 24). There was not very strong feedback in this present study from the participants about resources that they knew about on campus that had helped them with their development. Three of the participants, Sam, Riley and Amy

specifically mentioned the student-run Pride organization on campus, but Riley and Amy had never gone to it, they only knew that it existed. Colleen and Drake had similar answers in saying that the resources that had helped them the most were their friends or teammates, and not anything supported by or made available by the university. Colleen stated, "I'd have to say it's been mostly the students and my teammates" and Drake similarly responded with talking about those who lived on his floor the previous year, "the interaction helped me more than anything else." Sam was the only participant who mentioned any real university provided resources, saying "I haven't read anything personally, but I know the library is, has sections of [resources on homosexuality]." Sam stated that while he hadn't used the university provided resource at the library, the resource that had the most impact on his development had been the student-run Pride organization.

The interpersonal opportunities tool refers to the encouragement students will receive from faculty and staff to have meaningful interactions and connections with each other. Upon inquiring with the participants about how interactions with faculty and staff had affected their development, four out of the five participants stated that they had either received no assistance or had negative interactions with faculty and staff. Riley and Amy mentioned that they believed their coach, who was the staff member that they interacted with the most, was completely oblivious to the fact that any of the ladies that played on the team were gay. Both described separate moments in which their coach had made specific statements to the fact that there were no lesbians playing on the team that he coached. Colleen offered a slightly different view of their coach stating,

"I feel as though if he were to admit that he knew, I feel as though some parents and maybe even some possible recruits may ask him that, and if he were to be like, yes or no, we may lose [that recruit]."

This left them with the impression either that their coach did not pay attention enough to what was happening on his own team, or that he perceived homosexuality as something he needed to hide and not admit any knowledge about. Sam stated that he had never had any conversations or had the topic brought up in his classes, while Amy stated that she had heard a professor use the word "fag" during class before in a derogatory manner, and said that homosexuality had been brought up in class, "never really in a positive connotation."

Drake was the one participant to share a different view of things when asked if any faculty or staff had influenced his development he stated, "definitely during the training, for like, for resident assistant training." He went on to describe the training and the key points of equality and preventing discrimination.

Engelken discussed in the third tool the importance of faculty and administrators standing up as role models, as students must "see themselves reflected in campus life" (1998, p 28). Heterosexual students who are proceeding on their development into allies optimally must have strong ally role models in the faculty and staff around them. The only participant that mentioned any interactions with faculty and staff that he looked up to was Drake. In talking about the challenging gay resident that he had worked with on his community, he discussed that he would go to his supervisors when he needed help or advice with that particular situation. He expressed his reservations about that however, when he said, "I'm not sure their views exactly, I know their job tells them, say the obvious…I can't tell if they are worried about the individual or getting in trouble with

higher ups." Drake was expressing the very common need for role models of heterosexual students that they can look up to or come to with questions or for guidance. Engleken's (1998) meaning making theory discussed the importance of these role models, but also the difficulties that possible role models faced with stepping up into that position. Drake mentioned that he's not sure what his supervisor's beliefs were, but it was unknown whether Drake's supervisors felt comfortable expressing their views on this topic in their work environment. D'Emilio followed up on that thought by describing the need for explicitly written non-discrimination policies at universities, protecting those who maybe afraid to step up and state their opinions (1990). None of the other participants mentioned any role models or positive interactions with faculty that had influenced their development.

Future Implications on Heterosexual Identity Development on the University Campus

The amount of research available on heterosexual identity development is limited, but not nonexistent. There are studies available that lay the foundation for much-needed research. The point, however, is that the present study revealed it was not being actively utilized on the campus where the study was conducted. The participants in this study were all traditional students on a four year, mid-sized comprehensive college campus in the Midwestern United States. The PI initially sought to understand what factors during their traditional college experience had effectively encouraged their development in such a way that they all now identified as an 'ally' to gay, lesbian and bisexual populations. The answers that developed from the study revealed that their development was more in

spite of the university atmosphere than because of it, and the most important thing, and one of the only things that their institution had provided for them was the opportunity to live and go to school with a diverse group of students, some of whom were homosexual or bisexual.

The four out of five participants in the study reported that they had not been influenced at all by faculty members or staff, and certainly had not found any role models in them – something that Engelken highlighted as very important (1998). The one participant who reported that he felt supported was through his job as an RA, where he and his supervisors had spent extensive time receiving diversity training.

In a similar situation, the only resource identified by four out of the five participants as being available on campus for ally development was the student-run Pride organization on campus, and none of the four had ever attended a meeting. The most concerning part about this observation is the lack of administrative support for the one visible and readily identifiable resource for heterosexual ally development. D'Augelli railed (as cited in Engelken, 1998, p 25) against universities who leave their resources for homosexual, bisexual and heterosexual ally students to be student run, stating that the administration must "relieve open lesbian and gay students from the burden of solving the problems of their own victimization" (1989a). Colleges and Universities must begin heeding this information, and begin acting on it, realizing that allowing a visible student-run group space to operate and providing it with legitimate student organization status does not mean that the University is fulfilling any sort of need for the students. This is not a call for monetary support or funding. Institutionally supportive does not mean institutionally directed or run, it just means that the institution needs to step up and take a

direct interest. Support could be providing training to all faculty advisors of student groups on how to effectively advise a group and create a supportive environment for all diverse students. This would be supportive not just to the Pride group, but also to all other student groups that exist on a campus as well. The university needs to make sure that it is also making overtures to include Pride groups in on full-campus activities such as Homecoming as well as allowing, and perhaps encouraging the group to have a voice in forums such as Student Government.

Proposed Theory for Ally Development: "Ambuske Theory of Undergraduate Ally Development"

The research analyzed in Chapter II showed a comprehensive picture of how allies develop, what affects this development, and how institutions can provide role models, information, resources and opportunities for students to question, express their identity and to feel supported while doing so. The student participants in the present study voiced their ally development experience without any clear reference to established institutional support systems. From this theme and others that appeared through constant comparative analysis, the researcher proposes a new theory of ally identity development below.

By examining the participant's interviews it was deduced that the two largest factors that impacted their identity development were their pre-college experiences and the interactions that students had with gay, lesbian or bisexual individuals. The Pre-College Experiences theme can be divided into three subsections of value system, family

and religion. The Interactions theme can be divided into either positive or negative interactions.

In this theory the university is a setting of opportunity, and not an instrument of ally development. The participants of this study reflected back upon their university experience as merely a setting where they had the opportunity to have more interactions with lesbian, gay and bisexual peers as well as one where they faced prejudice directed against their homosexual and bisexual peers. Their strong established value systems and sense of friendship with these individuals encouraged their development into the role of an ally.

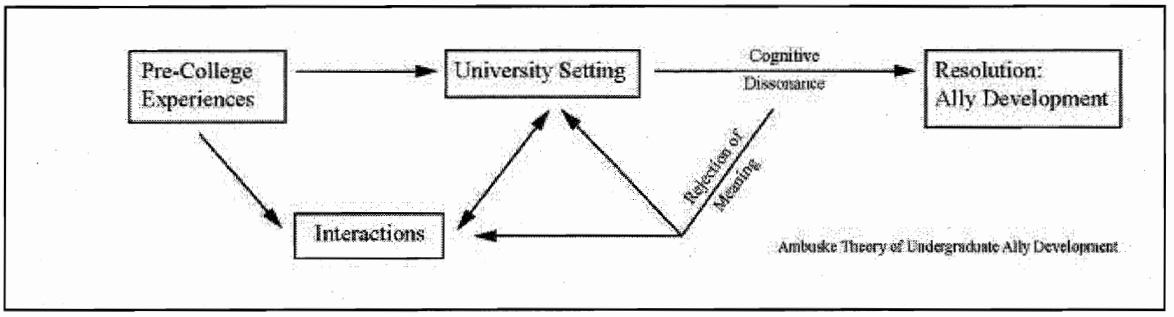

Figure 1. Ambuske Theory of Ally Development. This figure illustrates the path that students take to begin their ally development.

Figure 1 diagrams this theory. Pre-College Experiences are shown leading to University Settings as well as to Interactions. The reasoning for the dual paths is that some of the participants in the survey described interactions that they had with homosexual or bisexual individuals before arriving at college. This diagram takes that into account. Once a heterosexual student is in the University Setting, and has their Pre-College Experiences of family, values and religion to draw upon, and then has their interactions with homosexuals or bisexuals, there is most likely to be cognitive

dissonance. That cognitive dissonance shows them that their new experiences at college are not fitting into their existing beliefs. Depending upon the nature of their interactions, and their Pre-College Experiences, the heterosexual individual can then decide to rationalize away the new experiences by rejecting their meaning, or to adjust their belief system to accommodate those new experiences. Those who choose the latter, resolve the conflict in their mind and begin their development process of becoming an ally.

Recommendations for Practitioners and Researchers

Advocates from majority populations are crucial for minority groups since they add legitimacy to a cause, making it very difficult for other majority group members to continue to plead ignorance. The present study revealed a major lack of institutional support at a comprehensive Midwestern university toward heterosexual ally development, and provided many more questions about what developmental roles it is possible for the university to facilitate. This present study expanded upon previous research, and future research should be directed so as to achieve a better understanding of the following issues.

1) Qualitative studies on heterosexual ally development should be conducted on a variety of university campuses to obtain a better understanding of ally development in different collegiate environments. The present study took place at an institution with no formal administrative support for gay, lesbian, bisexual or ally students. Learning what ally development is like on a campus that does provide active support in the form of support centers staffed by full

time professional staff, or instituted inclusive curricula with homosexual, bisexual or allied themes.

2) Qualitative studies should address heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual faculty and staff members on university campuses to discover how they were supported if or when they acted as role models for students.
3) Practitioners must work toward establishment of non-discrimination policies at their institutions that specifically include sexual orientation and even gender orientation amongst the non-discrimination categories in the policies. Furthermore, faculty and staff members must take advantage of the opportunity provided by the protection of a non-discrimination policy to be a role model for students.
4) Researchers should look at institutional and administrative support of student-run Pride groups, and what sort of detrimental effects a lack of this support can bring to the group and the individual members.
5) Finally, similar studies need to provide an understanding of ally development for transgender individuals on college campuses.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol:

Questions for Open-Ended interview

1) When and in what ways did you become conscious of your identity as heterosexual?
2) Did any faculty or staff members have an influence on your development into a straight ally?
3) What, if any, resources provided by the University helped you in your development as a straight ally?
4) What kind of pre-college factors played a part in your development into a straight ally?
5) In what ways have campus gay, lesbian or bisexual community members validated your straight ally support?

Appendix B

Informed Consent

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

A Qualitative Examination of Heterosexual Allies On Campus

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Miranda Ambuske, a college student affairs graduate student from the Department of Counseling and Student Development at Eastern Illinois University.
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to examine the experience of self-identified heterosexual allies on campus through interviews to discern what affected their development as an ally.

- **PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

Partake in an audio-recorded interview. This interview will most likely last an hour and you may be contacted in the event the primary investigator needs to ask any follow up questions.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

There are no foreseeable risks for participants. All interviews will be scheduled around their availability to avoid causing any strain on their schedule.

- **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

A better understanding of how straight allies develop in college may result in better support for all students, as well as provide information to universities on what programming and departmental elements could foster a better environment that would encourage straight ally development. This would benefit society.

- **INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION (*Optional)***

The subject will receive a $5 gift certificate to a local coffee shop for their participation.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by the use of aliases in all documented and printed material. Participants will be asked to choose their own aliases; these chosen names will be how they will be identified in the study. During the course of the study the data will be stored on a flash drive that will remain in the principal investigator's possession at all times and also on a password protected computer in a locked room. Interview recordings will also be kept in this same locked

room. The only people who will have access to the data or subject identifiers will be the principal investigator, the principal investigator's advisor and the thesis committee members. All of the subject interviews will be audio recorded for transcription purposes only. These tapes will be kept in a locked file drawer in the room with all of the research material and password protected computer. Only the principal investigator will have access to these tapes, and the tapes will be reviewed inside the principal investigator's apartment. The principal investigator is the sole occupant of this apartment, so there are no chances for these tapes to be overheard by anyone else. If a participant decides to formally withdraw from the study they will have the choice of receiving all of the data that pertains to them (e.g., signed informed consent forms, their transcribed interview) or having it destroyed and all of their data will be removed from the study. All data pertaining to the study will be retained for three years in printed form that will be kept in a locked file drawer that remains in the principal investigator's possession. All electronic files or audio recordings will be kept on a password-protected computer. Any recordings will be kept in the same locked drawer as the files for three years, and then destroyed.

- **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If you volunteer to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled.
There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:
Miranda Ambuske, Principal Investigator
mtambuske@eiu.edu or 217-581-7694
Or
Dr. Charles Eberly, Thesis advisor
cgeberly@eiu.edu or 217-581-7235

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RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:
Institutional Review Board
Eastern Illinois University

600 Lincoln Ave.
Charleston, IL 61920
Telephone: (217) 581-8576
E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Printed Name of Participant

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

I, the undersigned, have defined and fully explained the investigation to the above subject.

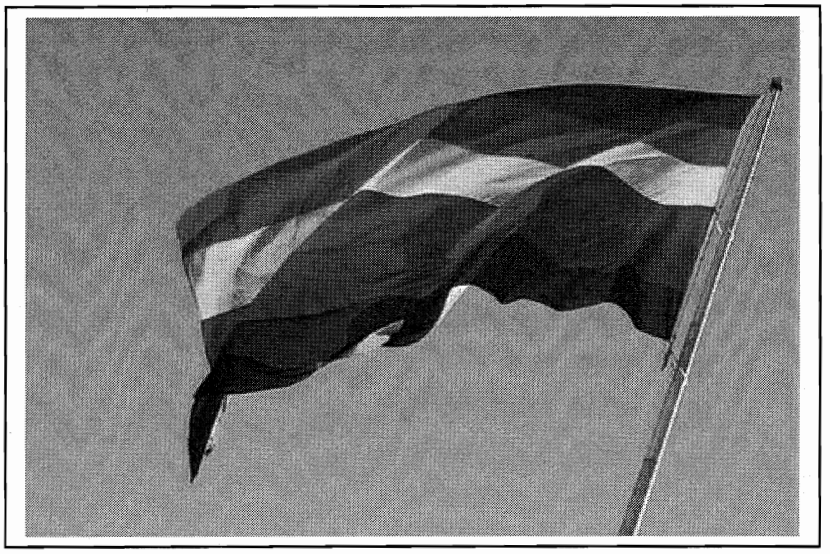
_____ _____

Signature of Investigator Date

Appendix C

Flyer for Participation

Are YOU a heterosexual that supports Gay Lesbian and Bisexual rights and freedoms?



Your input is needed in a fully confidential study!

Please contact Miranda at 217-581-7694

To see if you are eligible and to obtain full information about this study